Tho Thacher Prentiss

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A

SERMON,

DELIVERED AT THE

ORDINATION

OF THE

REV. THOMAS MASON,

TO THE PASTORAL CARE OF THE

CHURCH AND SOCIETY IN NORTHFIELD,

NOVEMBER 6, 1799.

BY THOMAS PRENTISS, A. M.

PASTOR OF THE CHURCH IN MEDFIELD.

BRATTLEBORO': FROM THE PRESS OF B. ANSHAD.

1799.

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BRITISH MUSEUM

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WORCESTER: PRINTED BY ISAIAH THOMAS, JUN.

1799.

SERMON, &c.

1 CORINTHIANS III. 5.

WHO THEN IS PAUL, AND WHO IS APOLLOS, BUT MINISTERS BY WHOM YE BELIEVED, EVEN AS THE LORD GAVE TO EVERY MAN?

THAT the nature, design, and tendency of the Ministerial Office be justly conceived, and properly regarded, both by those who are employed in it, and by the people to whom they minister, is of peculiar importance to the cause and interest of Christianity. The want of such just conceptions, among the Christians at Corinth, became an occasion of envy, strife, and division, by which their peace and harmony were disturbed, and their edification and improvement prevented. On account of the different preachers, who had been among them, they were broken into parties; some giving the preference to Paul, some to Apollos, some to Cephas or Peter, each setting their favourite religious Instructor at the head of a faction;—while others were disposed to reject the whole order, under pretence of adhering to Christ alone.

Such a ſpirit of diſcord and contention was exceedingly grievous to the Apoſtle. Without a wiſh to cheriſh the attachment of that party, which adhered to himſelf, he took the wiſeſt meaſure to reſtore union and harmony, by reproving them, equally, for their partiality and undue reſpect of perſons, reminding them, that thoſe about whom they contended, were not the authors of their faith or religion; that they had never called them to enliſt under their reſpective banners, as diſtinct heads and leaders, or to devote themſelves to the promotion of their particular private intereſt and reputation, as rivals to each other. They had not aſſumed a kindly dominion, nor vainly ſought to advance their own honour or emolument, by drawing away diſciples after them. In no inſtance had they exhibited themſelves in any other light, than as humble ſervants of Chriſt, acting under his authority and commiſſion, unitedly engaged in his cauſe, and devoted to his honour. On him they conſidered themſelves dependent for their ſeveral gifts, by which they were, in any meaſure, qualified for the work, to which they were called, and themſelves merely as inſtruments, whom he was pleaſed to uſe for the accompliſhment of the great and gracious purpoſes of his kingdom. At the ſame time, they humbly acknowledged his grace, in all the ſucceſs which attended their labours.

"Who then is Paul, and who is Apollos, but miniſters, by whom ye believed, even as the Lord gave to every man?" As much as if he had ſaid—Allow us to ſtand in the humble ſtation, aſſigned us by our Divine Maſter;—aſcribe to us that honour, only, which is our due, as ſervants and inſtruments, whom he is pleaſed to uſe, for the promo-

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tion of his cause: Consider us as coming to you, not in our own, but in his name, who has called us to bear his messages to the world; and if, from our ministrations, you derive any advantages, to him let the glory be given.

But was the Apostle regardless of his own, and the reputation of his fellow labourers? Was he indifferent to the good opinion and esteem of men? Or did he mean to inculcate a low and contemptible estimate of their office and employment?—Certainly not. But there is a medium between that extravagant opinion, which led them to glory in men, and a low, contemptuous estimate, which would withhold the honour and respect, due to their office and employment.

They claimed the character of men, divinely authorised and instructed, to dispense the truths of Christianity; of men, vested with authority, as stewards of the mysteries of God; of men, who were regularly called to plant and water in his vineyard. In these important characters, they challenged respect and esteem. While they were faithful to the trust committed to them, they were to be "esteemed very highly in love for their work's sake."

Such is the humble, but, at the same time, important station of all, who are regularly called to the work of the Gospel Ministry. Though they do not all rank as Apostles, nor are all qualified in the same extraordinary manner, nor yet are all vested with equal authority in the church; yet, the end and design of their office are the same. They are to build on the foundation which the Apostles have laid, to publish and inculcate the same system of doctrines and duties.

An all perfect being could have carried on the deſigns of his wiſdom and grace, in an immediete way, by a direct, internal revelation, and efficacious impreſſion of truth on the hearts of all men. But in the kingdom of grace, as in thoſe of nature and providence, he has choſen to operate by means and inſtruments, and has accordingly committed the treaſure of the goſpel to earthern veſſels. "When our Lord aſcended on high, he gave Apoſtles, Prophets, Evangeliſts, Paſtors, and Teachers, for the work of the Miniſtry."

It is indeed, no part of the buſineſs, of ordinary paſtors, and teachers, to propound new doctrines, or to add to the ſtock of truth, contained in Divine Revelation. The miniſtry of the Apoſtles, completed the ſyſtem of God's revealed will. Ordinary paſtors and teachers, are confined to the contents of the ſacred volume; from that treaſury, they are to derive all their inſtructions. They are never to "teach for doctrines, the commandments of men;" of men uninſpired; but to explain, and enforce the revelation, with which they are entruſted.

Inſpired teachers received their inſtructions directly from the fountain of infallible wiſdom, by the agency of the Holy Ghoſt; and, therefore, could not err, or miſtake. Ordinary paſtors and teachers, derive theirs, by the common aids of the ſpirit, accompanying a diligent, ſerious and prayerful ſtudy of the writings of thoſe inſpired men.—Such a mediate, ſecondary mode of inſtruction, admits not infallibility, gives no claim to dogmatical confidence, or lordly dominion over the faith of others.

Rightly to understand the scriptures; justly to conceive the doctrines and duties they contain and inculcate, will be the desire and endeavour of every honest man, who enters the sacred office. But with the same upright views, with the like piety and integrity of heart, different apprehensions may be entertained, and different conceptions formed of the meaning and design of the inspired penmen. Great and good men have entertained different opinions respecting some, which on both sides are conceived important articles of faith and practice. Opposite opinions, it must be acknowledged, cannot both be scriptural, or fall within the design of those parts of Revelation, on which they are, respectively, founded. But what man uninspired, may presume to constitute himself an infallible judge of controverted opinions, or denounce the vengeance of Heaven against those, whose opinions or practices in religion may be different from his own. Uninspired, fallible men, have indeed presumed to make the most confident decisions, and to pass their severe sentences of condemnation. But in all, excepting themselves, those very men clearly perceive, and readily pronounce it unjustifiable arrogance. The Apostles, with their high advantage of plenary inspiration, exercised no dominion over the faith of those whom they instructed: To the law and to the testimony, they directed their closest attention; and commended those, who most faithfully used the scriptures, as a standard, by which to try the doctrines they delivered, as divine. It is true they might and did, on certain occasions, exercise an authority, and use a commanding language, which would ill become ordinary pastors and teachers. The Apostle Paul, in his address to Timothy,

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on a special occasion, use such language as this—"Though I might be much bold in Christ, to enjoin thee that which is convenient, yet for love sake, I rather beseech thee." On other occasions, we find him adopting the kind, affectionate, and winning language of intreaty and persuasion, and never exercising the authority with which he was vested, excepting in cases of obstinate, pertinacious error and wickedness. From his knowledge of human nature, the Apostle had learnt, what it eminently concerns religious instructors ever to realize, that mankind must be drawn by the mildness of love and persuasion, and not driven with whips and scorpions, into the paths of truth and goodness. The understanding must be properly informed, the judgment must be convinced, before it can seasonably admit, as truth, any proposition which is offered for its assent and reception.

To assist men in their enquiries after revealed truth, is an important branch of the ministerial office: It may indeed be justly considered as the primary and leading objects of its institution.

Men may read the scriptures, but they need helps to understand them. The Ethiopian eunuch, whose conversion we have recorded in the Acts of the Apostles, had the Revelation of God in his hands, and was able to read it, yet he desired and received from Philip, the Evangelist, instruction with regard to its particular meaning and application. The case is in a good measure the same, with those who are born and educated under the full light, and advantages of a complete Revelation.

The capacities of many are so small, and the opportunities of the generality of mankind, amidst the necessary employments

employments and engagements of the world, so inconsiderable, that the institution of the Christian Ministry is manifestly a display of divine wisdom and grace, to explain the Revelation which is given to guide them in the path of happiness.

Besides—an attentive consideration of the moral state of man, the darkness of his understanding; the corruption of his heart; the irregularity and disorder of his affections; all which conspire to render him thoughtless, indifferent, and forgetful, respecting his obligations, his duty, and his interest, must clearly discover the importance and utility of some regular, shated mode of instruction, superadded to that which is derived from reading the Holy Scriptures. The use which mankind in general would be likely to make of the Bible, if its truths were not enforced by more public instruction, would be so little, and so partial, that it may be doubted whether even leading and foundation principles would be generally known or regarded. Of this fact, observation and experience, are fully illustrative: For it has been uniformly found, that ignorance and vice, are the natural growth of the soil, which is not cultivated by a preached gospel.

Of the things which men know, they need to be put in remembrance; to have their minds stirred up, and to be frequently called to recollect and apply to themselves the things in which they have been constantly instructed. The Apostle complains of the Christian Hebrews, that when, on account of the singular advantages they had enjoyed, and the length of time in which they had been instructed in the christian system, they ought to have been teachers, as

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able to instruct others; they were so deficient in their knowledge of the Gospel, as to need renewed instruction, even in the "first principles of the oracles of God, and were become such as had need of milk, and not of strong meat."

Such is the perverse and degenerate state of man, that he needs "line upon line, and precept upon precept;"—and amidst the temptations of the present world, all prove too little, to prevent his most unhappy neglect of the "great salvation," and stupid inattention to the things of his peace. Multitudes, under all the advantages of the gospel, with the constant enjoyment of the ministry of reconciliation, continue "in the gall of bitterness," and under the bond of iniquity, estranged from God, and regardless of futurity. What then, might be reasonably expected, were they left without the *Christian Sabbath, and those stated weekly instructions in piety and morality*, for which that sacred day of rest, furnishes such suitable and convenient opportunity.

To deal with men, in the interesting concerns of their final salvation, by men like themselves—by men, who are partakers in the common corruption, infirmity, and misery of human nature—by men, who are subjected to like passions, surrounded with similar temptations, needing like grace, and the benefits of the same redemption, which they are to preach to others; this is surely an expressive mark of divine goodness.

One great design of this order and appointment of Heaven, an Apostle assures us, was the more conspicuous display of divine grace in the conversion and salvation of sinners. "We have this treasure in earthen vessels, that

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the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us."

Feeble creatures, "who dwell in houses of clay," surrounded with numberless infirmities, frail, mortal, and dying, are employed, by divine wisdom, to dispense the gospel to their fellow mortals, that the excellence of the power in accomplishing its great and gracious ends, may appear to be of God, and not of those who dispense its saving truths.

Man can speak to the ear. He can inform the understanding, and possibly excite and warm the animal affections and passions. But a much greater work is necessary, to the saving efficacy of evangelical truth. The heart must be changed from its state of moral corruption and disorder; for our Saviour has assured us, in language most positive, "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." This change, by which we become new creatures, the sacred oracles instruct us, "is not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God."— We are taught to attribute it, to the efficacious operation and influence of the Holy Ghost; to acknowledge his divine and gracious agency, in effectually "calling men out of darkness into light, and from the power of sin, to God." The Apostles then might well view themselves, as humble coopertors only, or, as instruments whom God was pleased to use for the great purposes of his wisdom and love. It was their duty to plant and water, but "neither he who planted" was any thing, "nor he who watered, but God, who gave the increase." To the divine agency they ascribed all the success which attended them, in their various

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ous miniſtrations, and continually commended themſelves to the bleſſing of the Moſt High, humbly imploring his continual preſence with them; at the ſame time, they earneſtly requeſted the devout prayers of the chriſtians whom they addreſſed, that they might have effectual divine aid and encouragement, and be rendered happy inſtruments of advancing the cauſe and kingdom of Chriſt.

It is equally the duty of all miniſters of the goſpel, to act a faithful part, "as good ſtewards of the manifold grace of God." It becomes them to conſider well, the nature and importance of their office, to acquaint themſelves in the beſt poſſible manner with its various duties, to apply with diligence and prayer to the ſtudy of the Holy Scriptures; to attain the beſt poſſible knowledge of the truths and duties of the goſpel; and in the courſe of their miniſtrations to declare all the counſel of God. Their natural talents, their acquired abilities, with the gifts and graces which are conferred upon them by the Father of lights, ſhould be wholly conſecrated to the high and important work. They ſhould "ſtudy to ſhew themſelves approved unto God, workmen who need not be aſhamed, rightly dividing the word of truth." To be inſtruments of glory to God, and of good to their fellow men, in the great concerns of their ſpiritual and everlaſting ſalvation, ought to be the grand object.

To this end, they ſhould ſet before them their wretchedneſs, as fallen and guilty creatures; warn them of their danger; inculcate a penitent return from the evil of their ways; urge them to believe on the Lord Jeſus Chriſt, as the only hope ſet before them, and to truſt the everlaſting concerns of their ſouls with him, in a full reliance on his

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complete atonement and mediation. In a word—To "beseech them to be reconciled unto God." If they may succeed in these particulars, the great end of their ministry is thus far answered; but in proportion as they fail of these happy effects, they have reason to complain, that they labour in vain, and spend their strength for nought.

The Apostle could speak to these Corinthians, with confidence, as to his children; "for in Christ Jesus he had begotten them through the gospel."

When the labours of any, who are employed in the ministry, are attended with success, it is an occasion of peculiar joy, and justly inspires an increased ardour in the further prosecution of the good work. Painful is it, on the other hand, to have reason to reflect upon toils and labours, week after week, and year after year, which have proved fruitless and unprofitable. Still, it is a comforting consideration, that the approbation of Heaven, and the final reward, depend not on the success with which the labours of the vineyard are crowned; but, upon the fidelity with which they have been performed. "Every man," says the Apostle, in our context, "shall receive his own reward, according to his own labour."

Those who are eminently active, diligent, and faithful in the duties of the Ministry, may see little happy fruit of their labours. Still it must be acknowledged a wise, prudent, and faithful improvement of the talents and gifts with which they are furnished, affords the best ground to hope for the divine blessing; while the slothful and indifferent, and those whose views and motives are low and dishonourable, who have little concern for the honour of God, or the

 interest

intereſt of the cauſe, in which they are profeſſedly engaged, may reaſonably expect to be uſeleſs and unprofitable.—Thoſe who are actuated by worldly conſiderations; who enter on or proſecute the Miniſtry, as a trade, merely to gain a living, or from the motives of oſtentation, vanity, and popular applauſe; who preach themſelves, inſtead of Chriſt Jeſus the Lord, muſt fail of the approbation of Heaven—Though it is poſſible they may have been inſtrumental of ſpiritual advantage to ſome of their fellow creatures, they will themſelves fall ſhort of the ſalvation to which they have been inſtrumental of conducting others.

With the Apoſtle Paul, this was a matter of deep ſolicitude, leſt, after he had "preached to others, he ſhould himſelf be a caſt-a-way." It is a ſubject of infinite concern to all who engage in the Chriſtian Miniſtry. For how ſolemn muſt be the account of thoſe who are profeſſedly engaged for the cauſe of Chriſt, but are themſelves ſtrangers and enemies to him in their hearts! Of thoſe, of whom it muſt be ſaid, they have undertaken to be "keepers of the vineyards, but their own vineyard they have not kept."

Miniſters, of all men, will be moſt inexcuſable, and their condemnation highly aggravated. Great is the truſt committed to them. They cannot, indeed, command ſucceſs; but if they are ſlothful, negligent, and unfaithful; if they lead men into errors and miſtakes; if they corrupt the ſimplicity of the Goſpel; if they do not ſet themſelves in oppoſition to the corruption of the human heart; if they do not faithfully warn, admoniſh and reprove, the blood of thoſe who periſh, through their neglect or miſmanagement, will be required at their hands.

There has never, perhaps, been a period, when the office of the Christian Ministry was more important, or more difficult, than the present. It is an age of peculiar levity and thoughtless dissipation, both of principle and manners; an age of great and growing infidelity, atheism, and corruption, in religious and moral opinion; an age, in which "iniquity abounds, and the love of many waxes cold." Our lot, my Fathers and Brethren, is cast in a time, when the enemies of the Cross of Christ have combined in a systematic arrangement of their mode of opposition; a time, when, not only the truth of Revelation, but the very first principles of all religion, natural, as well as revealed, *the existence of a GOD*, is called in question, openly disputed and denied. We live at a time, when there appears a peculiar fondness for revolutionising, not only systems of government, but of religion. Add to this—a spirit of general prevailing coldness and indifference; a sad decay of vital piety; a growing disregard of the forms of Godliness, and awful contempt and neglect of Christian Institutions. These circumstances of the times, loudly call for our vigorous and active exertions. It becomes us to remember we "are set for the defence of the Gospel." That it is our part faithfully to advocate, and resolutely to maintain its cause, in opposition to every attack, whether of its open or insidious enemies.

Let us not be backward to any branch of our duty, nor, *coward like*, desert the cause in which we have engaged; but in humble dependence on the spirit and grace of God, to crown our labours with success, let us faithfully

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profecute the buſineſs of our high calling, and "fulfil the miniſtry we have received of the Lord Jeſus." God is graciouſly giving ſucceſs to the Goſpel in divers parts of our own, and in ſome other countries. An awakened, ſerious attention in places, where lately a ſpirit of deep ſlumber prevailed, is a comforting evidence that the cauſe of Chriſtianity is not abandoned by its Divine Author, and of the ſtability of his promiſe, that "the gates of hell ſhall not prevail againſt the Church."* At the ſame time, it affords abundant encouragement, to "be inſtant, in ſeaſon and out of ſeaſon," and to "make full proof of our miniſtry." In the morning ſow thy ſeed, and in the evening withhold not thy hand, for thou knoweſt not which ſhall proſper, whether this or that.

God can make us, as he has made others, inſtruments of ſaving good, to the ſouls of our fellow creatures. And how truly deſirable is it, to be *the fellow labourers of God*, in converting "ſinners from the error of their ways," in "ſaving them from death, and hiding a multitude of ſins!"

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* *From divers parts of this Commonwealth, from Connecticut, New Hampſhire, and Vermont, there are accounts of a more than uſual attention to the miniſtrations of the Goſpel, which afford a hopeful proſpect of a happy increaſe of practical piety and goodneſs.*

In Europe, particularly in Great Britain, there appears to be an awakened attention, productive of great exertions, among different denominations of Chriſtians, to ſend abroad the glad tidings of ſalvation. The number of Miſſionaries to the diſtant iſles of the South Sea, who have already entered on active ſervice, under very favourable proſpects, afford a pleaſing hope that the harveſt will be plenteous. May a gracious God ſmile on all wiſe and prudent endeavours for ſo important purpoſes.

Let us, my fathers and brethren, magnify our office, but never encourage prejudice and partiality, or a spirit of party among our hearers. Let it be our *united* object, and aim, to bring men to Christ, and not to enlist them under our particular banners, as distinct heads and leaders, or set up ourselves as rivals to each other. Let us ever remember, that we have one professed "master, even Christ, and that all we are brethren."

YOU will not, my dear sir, be dissatisfied with the idea the subject has given, of the office on which you are now entering, as merely instrumental, in the great scheme of salvation, by Jesus Christ. It is not a humiliating or degrading consideration. It detracts nothing from the dignity, the worth, and importance of a good and faithful labourer, in the vineyard of God.

Angels, you will recollect, are "ministering spirits to the heirs of salvation; but they are merely instruments of good to those in whose service they are employed; and they are *sent* by the great head of the church, to perform their respective tasks. Our blessed Lord, you will also remember, was "a *minister* of the circumcision, for the truth of God, to confirm the promises made unto the fathers." He "came, not to be ministred unto, but to minister."—By his divine power, he could have given full effect to every gracious word which proceeded out of his mouth; but on the great subject of his religion, he addressed himself to the reason and consciences of men, as moral, free, and accountable creatures.

It is surely enough, if the servant be as his master.

A ſenſe of the duties attached to your ſtation, will render you, I truſt, diligent, active, and faithful, in all the branches of miniſterial ſervice.

Your open, independent mind, I am confident, will not ſuffer you to reject any truth which you ſhall find in the ſcriptures; at the ſame time, your honeſt deſire to know the mind of Chriſt, will lead you to ſtudy, and examine with ſerious attention; while a ſenſe of dependence will cauſe you, on all occaſions, to look up to God for light, and guidance, and to implore the effectual grace of the Holy Spirit, to ſucceed your miniſtrations, and render you a happy inſtrument of advancing the kingdom of Chriſt, in this place.

With the ſincereſt affection, do I wiſh you, my brother, a long, a quiet, but eſpecially a *uſeful* miniſtry. May God be with, and bleſs you. May he give you many ſeals of your miniſtry, many for your joy and crown in the day of the Lord Jeſus.

The Church and Society in this place, will pleaſe to accept the congratulations of the preacher, on the preſent occaſion.

You are now, my brethren, in conſequence of your active exertions, and, I truſt, in anſwer to your prayers, receiving a religious inſtructor, a watchman, a guide, an overſeer, a paſtor, a biſhop. You are ſolemnly placing yourſelves under his miniſterial direction and authority, as an inſtrument for good to your ſouls. You will, I truſt, reſpect and honour him in his important office; but not contend for him, *as the author of your faith and religion.* You will be deſirous that he may become an inſtrument of

saying good to you, and to your children. To this end, you will, I trust, aid and encourage him in every part of his work—particularly, by attending regularly the services of the sanctuary and the administration of christian ordinances. You will not fail to pray for him, that he may be a faithful and successful labourer.

For his temporal support, you have been careful to provide. While he receives, thus liberally, of your carnal things, I pray you to receive, with personal application, the spiritual things which he shall statedly dispense—"the sincere milk of the word, that you may grow thereby." And may you be "nourished up in the words of faith and sound doctrine," with the practical knowledge "of Jesus Christ and him crucified," to a meetness for the inheritance of the saints in light.

A few words to this numerous and respected Assembly, shall close the Discourse.

You are all, my friends, deeply interested in that divine and gracious system, which it is the business of the christian ministry to explain and enforce. As candidates for eternity, it is of infinite importance that you have a part in that scheme of redemption, by which alone, any sinner of the human race can be delivered from the wrath to come. We tell you, you must "believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and receive him, as the hope set before you. This we consider, as the grand subject and end of our ministry. If you find us, at any time, desirous to enlist you in our service, or in the interest of any party, instead of leading you to Christ, you will do well to disregard and

reject

reject us; but, if we faithfully instruct and warn you, according to the scriptures, give heed, we beseech you, to the things we speak; compare them with those lively oracles, apply them faithfully to your own hearts and consciences. And may God give effect to his own institution, to the instruments and means with which you are respectively favoured. May ministers and people be faithful, and together receive hereafter, a divine and gracious reward, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory forever. Amen.

END OF THE SERMON.

The.

The Charge,

By Reverend JUDAH NASH, of Montague.

Reverend Sir,

OUR introducing you into the ſacred office of a miniſter of the goſpel, implies, in us, a good degree of reaſonable confidence in your fidelity. We have committed the things, which we have received, unto you, as unto a faithful man, perſuaded of your qualifications for a public teacher.

Our ſolicitude for your faithful diſcharge of the duties of this miniſtry is but an expreſſion of our regard for you and the church and people with whom you are now connected, and alſo for the divine Lord and Maſter whom you ſerve.

To preach the word in ſeaſon and out of ſeaſon, as occaſion may invite; to reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with all long ſuffering and doctrine; to adminiſter divine ordinances and diſcipline in the church; in a word, to preach Chriſt, warning every man, and teaching every man in all wiſdom, that you may preſent every man perfect in Chriſt Jeſus, in whoſe name, and by whoſe authority, we now ſolemnly charge you ſo to do—is a work great in itſelf and in its conſequences. It will require great diligence, in ſtudy and meditation, to illuſtrate the ſcriptures and their due application to the various characters and conditions of men. The doctrines of chriſtianity muſt be explained with great caution, in their true ſenſe and meaning; its precepts enforced in their importance and energy; the rewards and puniſhments of another world exhibited in their greatneſs, and in their duration.

Of you, will alſo be expected a great degree of prudence and circumſpection. The eyes of the people will be upon you, as an example. Therefore, in all things, ſhow yourſelf a pattern of good works. In doctrine ſhew uncorruptedneſs, gravity, ſincerity, and ſound ſpeech, which cannot be condemned; that he who is of the contrary part may be aſhamed, having no evil thing to ſay of you.

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The objects of this ministry are great; not, indeed, objects of a worldly nature; It is a ministry, which does not promise wealth, or power, or exemption from the reproaches of ungodly tongues, and the contradiction of sinners. No; far otherwise. Its objects are of a different kind, and of a most animating nature, viz. to deliver immortal souls from perdition; to increase the number of the blessed, and the *hallelujahs* of the redeemed; to give joy in Heaven by the repentance of sinners; to enlarge the Redeemers kingdom, and promote his interest among men; to weaken the kingdom of Satan, defeat his malice, counteract his malevolent designs, and diminish the number of his wretched subjects, by plucking them as brands out of the burning.

These are the glorious hopes and all important prospects, to animate, to urge, yea, even constrain you to the most ardent zeal, and patient unwearied endeavours to promote the glory of God, the interest of Christ, and the salvation of men.

Dear brother and fellow labourer, let nothing dishearten, or discourage you. Let no surmountable obstacles, which may meet your ministry, greatly move you; but be steadfast, and unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labour shall not be in vain in the Lord; but when the chief Shepherd and Bishop of souls shall appear, you shall receive a crown of righteousness, which fadeth not away.

Right Hand of Fellowship,

BY REVEREND JOEL FOSTER, OF NEW SALEM.

MINISTERIAL fellowship, or communion, having been once proffered to Paul and Barnabas, by the expressive token of giving the right hand, the practice, as founded on this example, has generally obtained, in the churches of this land, as a closing part in the solemn transactions of ordination.

It is not used as a superstitious rite or mere formality, which would by no means grace such a solemnity; but as a significant ceremony—as a pledge of mutual friendship and fidelity.

It is a token of christian affection; an acknowledgment of the just tenure of ministerial honours and authority, and an engagement to all the offices of brotherly kindness.

Pursuant, therefore, to the request of this venerable council, and in conformity to so good a custom and usage, I do now, in behalf of the Reverend Elders present, give unto you, Reverend and dear Sir, this right hand, in token of our sincere affection for you. We hereby acknowledge your regular introduction to the office of Christian Bishop, testifying our hearty reception of you, as a beloved brother and fellow-labourer in God's vineyard, and owning you as fully invested with the dignity and authority, and intitled to all the immunities and honours pertaning to the sacred office.

While our faith is thus plighted; while we promise you our prayers, together with our best counsel and assistance, as occasion may require, we expect yours in return, and that you return to us the right hand, as a pledge of the same christian respect and benevolence. We now wish you prosperity in your good work: Exhort you to persevere in the principles of love and loyalty to the King of Zion, into whose service you have enlisted, and under whom you have received a commission as an officer in the church.—To his grace we commend you. May you increase in knowledge and piety—be animated with zeal and courage in the cause of your Divine Master—consult the true interest of his kingdom—be faithful in his will, and successful in his work. To this end, you will manage your zeal with prudence and condescension; dispise the disdainful airs of bigotry and superstition, and adorn yourself with every obliging grace and social virtue. Be an example of the believers in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, faith and purity. Thus may you fulfil the ministry you have received of the Lord Jesus, finish your course with joy, and finally appear before the Chief Shepherd with the honour and approbation peculiar to a faithful ambassador of Christ.

Laudable custom authorises a word of address to the church and people in this place. Dearly beloved, the profes-

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fering of our fellowship to your pastor is an act by which we also embrace you in the arms of our charity. We congratulate you on this joyful occasion, that the great Shepherd and Bishop of souls, under whose care and direction the church has ever been since its first establishment in the world, has seen fit to send another labourer into this part of his vineyard. You will receive your minister as a pledge of his love; as the effect of his care for you and your children. Look not for perfection in your minister, nor be unforgiving, for he is a man; he is compassed with infirmity like other men, and therefore can have compassion upon the ignorant, and on them who are out of the way. Give the gospel a cordial reception among you, and let the true and genuine spirit of christianity reign in your hearts, that you may be able to show, out of a good conversation, your works with meekness of wisdom. Under the auspices of a divine blessing, may you long be a happy people, distinguished by that unity and peace among yourselves, which have long characterized this place, and abound more and more in holiness and liberality.

Thus walking hand in hand through the trials and darkness of the present scene, may you finally come together to the Zion above, with songs and everlasting joy upon your heads!

Now to the only wise God, and our Saviour, be glory in the churches. Amen.

FINIS.

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28 AP 68